



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/new-assessment-tool-builds-case-scalability>

New Assessment Tool Builds the Case for Scalability



Fintrac Inc.

Vendors in Tajikistan, where Feed the Future piloted an assessment to evaluate constraints to scaling proven agricultural technologies.

The most recent [Feed the Future Progress Report](#) showed that in 2012, the initiative reached more than seven million smallholder farmers with new technologies and management practices to improve agricultural production, more than four times the number of people reached in 2011. The [stories](#) of individuals around the world who are reaping the benefits of these innovations demonstrate the return on investment that is possible when farmers, processors and others have access to cutting-edge technology and reliable information on agriculture and nutrition.

In the coming year, Feed the Future strives to bring the most promising agricultural technologies to even greater numbers of smallholder farmers. But in order to scale up, we first need to have a comprehensive understanding of which technologies have the greatest potential, and what we need to do at a policy or infrastructure level to create the conditions where these technologies can take off. We call that building an “enabling environment” for scalability.

As part of that process, Feed the Future has developed a methodology to assess agricultural technologies, markets and policies in order to tackle the biggest obstacles to reaching smallholder farmers with the tools and services they need to improve production and food security. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID’s) [Enabling Agricultural Trade](#) project, Feed the Future is piloting a new Agricultural Technology Commercialization Assessment that evaluates constraints and opportunities for technology commercialization and adoption.

This assessment looks at three important factors in scalability: first, it analyzes market opportunity to determine whether the demand exists for the improved quality or quantity of production that a proposed technology is intended to create. For example, if an improved seed variety can boost wheat yields, but the demand for wheat in a region is low compared to other crops, then it may be more strategic to invest resources elsewhere.

Second, the assessment examines the projected impact of a technology on a production system and analyzes its potential to increase the incomes of smallholder farmers. In order to be scalable, agricultural technologies need to demonstrate feasibility in the local context of costs, cultural practices and other considerations.

Third, the assessment evaluates the enabling environment to determine whether technology suppliers face economic disincentives that could prevent or dissuade them from producing, importing or distributing certain technologies due to legal, regulatory or institutional barriers. In order for agricultural technologies to flourish, businesses need to have confidence that they can operate safely and profitably in an environment that encourages investment.

The new assessment tool was successfully piloted in Tajikistan in January 2014 to identify opportunities for scaling up agricultural technologies in the horticulture and livestock sectors. The findings, which are expected this month, will make substantial research and over 150 in-country interviews available to implementing partners and the Government of Tajikistan, and will inform other [Feed the Future activities](#) in the region. Tajikistan is one example of a country's high taxes and weak regulatory enforcement preventing farmers from using improved agricultural inputs or modern transplanting processes at a large scale.

Feed the Future's assessment tool is expected to inform USAID agriculture and food security programming in focus countries around the world and help shape strategies to bring agricultural technologies to scale. Reports resulting from the assessment will include recommendations for specific legal and policy interventions where changes are required to translate responsible private-sector investment into sustainable technology adoption.

The principles and core components of Feed the Future's assessment methodology draw from the upcoming policy brief, "Creating an Enabling Environment for Agricultural Technology Commercialization: Bridging the Gap between Innovation and Uptake," which will be available along with the pilot report from Tajikistan on [USAID's Enabling Agricultural Trade website](#) later this month.